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STARK STATEMENT ON 143 NEW MEDICARE ADVANTAGE PLANS

WASHINGTON - Today, U.S. Rep. Pete Stark (D-CA, 13th) released the following statement regarding the announcement by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) that 143 new Medicare Advantage plans will provide services in 2005.

"Given the multi-billion dollar giveaway to HMOs and other private plans, it is no surprise so many insurers are falling over themselves to take advantage of the money," Stark said. "If you're an HMO, privatization clearly pays. When it comes to health care, this Administration's track record has consistently helped those who prioritize profits over patients. I would warn seniors, however, that if you sign up for a plan generated by corporate payola from the Bush Administration, your coverage will disappear when the money does. In the current budget situation, we should follow the recommendations of the non-partisan experts at MedPAC and stop these overpayments. Doing so would eliminate the need to cut Medicaid while allowing some improvements to Medicare."